

City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle
Special Council Meeting/Workshop at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday – November 16, 2010 – 5:30 p.m.

Present:

Council President William Barthel
Councilperson Ted Megginson
Councilperson Teel Petty

Absent: Councilperson John Cochran, Councilperson John Gaworski

Also present: Mayor Jack Klingmeyer, City Administrator Cathryn Thomas, Finance Director Marian Delaney, Police Chief Kevin McDerby.

1. Presentation and discussion on City website update

President Barthel said that Greg Hughes from the State of Delaware is here to give a presentation regarding the City website. City Council had mentioned that it was going to do it as an RFP. This is the first step of going through the process of finding the most cost-effective way to update the City's website that meets the City's needs.

Mr. Hughes is the director of the Government Information Center and co-chair of the municipal Web developers group, which works with local governments to enhance their Web presence. A trend he observed was a lack of funding, a lack of skills and a lack of time for communities to do websites—and outdated websites or sometimes a lack of website at all.

That led to the state offering a free solution for local governments. It is a solution that the state would host and use blogging software, WordPress. They have already partnered with other towns and come in providing training and graphic design. They can take a current site and convert it to the WordPress architecture. They also train City staff to update site content.

One stipulation is the City must use a delaware.gov domain, which is an official government domain. There are constraints: explicit advertising would not be allowed, such as banner ads. They recommend working with the local chamber of commerce and link to them.

Administrator Thomas asked about using the existing newcastle.org site address. She asked if people who go to the old site could be sent to the new one.

Mr. Hughes said that was what they would recommend doing, keeping the old name and brand already developed. Traffic would be redirected. That means you don't have to reprint materials that have the addresses. He recommended keeping the old one to prevent others from taking it.

Mrs. Thomas asked about the current business listings that appear on the site.

Mr. Hughes said he needs to address that as sites are starting to have those types of material. The advantages of using the State is it is free, it is maintainable by City staff and the agency can help when needed during regular business hours.

Mrs. Thomas said currently the City pays for the site hosting, DCA.net, which has done a good job. And they do the content updates at a certain cost. The City would save the hosting costs and content update costs using the State's service.

Mr. Hughes said the hosting is on a state partner site. Government Information Center does not charge for its services.

They have six sites in production right now: Newport, Millville, Magnolia, Elsmere, Felton and Greenwood. They are in the process of working with others, including New Castle, which would be the biggest.

Mr. Hughes described the development process:

- 1) a meeting where they learn what the City likes and does not like about the existing City site and others sites;
- 2) give it to a designer;
- 3) start uploading the content;
- 4) training City staff; and
- 5) City takes over content management.

Most municipalities have one primary content updater and one backup.

Sites are designed to run across browser platforms and mobile platforms. WordPress is online and the City does not have to purchase it.

Greenwood was able to bring an intern in to load a lot of information.

President Barthel asked what concerns other communities have had.

Mr. Hughes said he was not aware of any, particularly because of the attraction of it being free. Some might have been leery of that, but it's not really free because they are working on websites everyday for the State. One concern is about e-mail, having an e-mail address of @newcastle.gov. The answer to whether the City could have that is maybe, depending the municipality's set up and whether the City has its own exchange server.

President Barthel asked if the end results will be comparable to what it is available commercially, such as online payments.

Mr. Hughes said yes; Elsmere does that. There is a lot of flexibility.

He summed up by saying 1) it is free; 2) the goal is to empower staff to do the updates, but if they are unable the Government Information Center will assist; 3) it typically takes a few weeks to complete from the time it is started. Right now, they are looking at February before it will be completed.

In most communities, it is the Town Clerk that does the updating.

The City currently spends \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year on maintenance of the Web site, including the hosting.

Administrator Thomas said she wanted to give City Council and the Mayor heads up that Johnson Controls has contacted the City.

She and Building Official Jeff Bergstrom met with officials from the firm. The company is looking at a variety of locations, including a piece of property outside the City in Centerpoint. It is in the unincorporated part of the county and there is an existing 250,000-square-foot building there. They want to add up to a 50,000-square-foot addition that would encroach on a parcel that is in the City. They are talking about possibly asking to have the property annexed into the City and put that addition on. It involves the end process of manufacturing batteries for after-market. She said the matter would be on the next Planning Commission agenda.

Mayor Klingmeyer said he was in favor of it.

2. Discussion of what shall be contained in the City's Request to the Trustees for Funding in 2011.

President Barthel said based on the most recent information the final completion of the stormwater projects will not occur until Spring 2011. The City will not be responsible for the first payment until the first quarter of the City's next fiscal year, around September 2011. It looks like \$140,000 the City will need in its next fiscal year. The City will complete its funding commitment, \$100,000, to the Library this year. That would mean the City will owe another \$40,000.

Traditionally the City has requested items such as new trucks from the Trustees. He believes if instead the City looks to the Trustees for the \$140,000 and, perhaps, a police car, that would give the City the ability to fund the other items from its own budget.

The Trustees already have committed \$190,000 toward an overage of \$388,000 on the project. MSC has committed \$50,000; the Conservation District has committed \$97,000; the engineer \$10,000; and the local representatives \$18,000. That means the City will have to come up with the overage in early 2011, which means the City will have to pay \$23,000 and the interest costs, roughly \$20,000, by the end of the current fiscal year.

President Barthel suggests asking for \$140,000 and a new police car, which costs \$30,200.

Administrator Thomas pointed out that the other items Council considered requesting funding for could come from the \$100,000 no longer spent on the Library—if the Trustees agree to fund the \$140,000.

Councilperson Petty asked whether the matter with the Wolford property will cost the City any money.

Administrator Thomas said it should not cost the City any money because the contractor started work without authority to do so. The reason they have not gone back to return the property to the correct state is they are waiting to hear from the Wolford Estate's attorney regarding the restoration plan and authorize its execution. The City is offering to make them whole and fix it.

Councilperson Petty said she was concerned because she heard there might be a lawsuit over it.

Councilperson Megginson said his only concern about the proposal is that one of the Public Works trucks is in rough shape.

The consensus of the board was to go forward with the request to the Trustees, which are due November 30, 2010.

3. Discussion of a request from the Library Board of Trustees for the City to provide the final \$100,000 installment payment as part of the total \$300,000 City contribution to the Library capital expansion project.

President Barthel said Councilperson Cochran was suggesting the City pay the complete \$100,000 now. President Barthel suggested paying \$50,000 now and the other \$50,000 later.

The consensus was to pay \$50,000 now and rest before the current fiscal year ends.

President Barthel said regarding the Web site his biggest concern is that the end result is something along the lines of what is commercially available.

Councilperson Petty ask how guaranteed it is working with the State.

Administrator Thomas said the City can use this service now and if down the road the State starts charging, the City can look for other alternatives but it will still have an updated website and be saving money.

President Barthel suggested City officials look at the other sites the State group has done.

A discussion was held about business listings being on a .gov (dot.gov) site.

A discussion was held about the status of the review of new software for the City.

Councilperson Megginson made a motion to adjourn. Councilperson Petty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson
New Castle City Clerk